CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR CYBERSECURITY HEARING
September 15, 2005

I want to welcome everyone to this morning's hearing on cybersecurity, a subject that has long been a focus of the Science Committee.

The nation has been making progress in developing ways to fend off and respond to cyber attacks. For example, federal agencies have been implementing our Cybersecurity Research and Development Act, albeit at funding levels significantly below what we would wish. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, responding to calls from industry and the Congress, has created the position of Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity.

But as our witnesses today will make clear, we still have a very long way to go. We still pay inadequate attention to cybersecurity research and operations in both the government and private sector.

We shouldn't have to wait for the cyber equivalent of a Hurricane Katrina - or even and Hurricane Ophelia might serve - to realize that we are inadequately prepared to prevent, detect and respond to cyber attacks.

And a cyber attack can affect a far larger area at a single stroke that can any hurricane. Not only that, given the increasing reliance of critical infrastructures on the Internet, a cyber attack could result in deaths as well as in massive disruption to the economy and daily life.

There's another lesson we should take from Katrina beyond the need to prepare for real dangers that have not been recently experienced. And that is not to focus exclusively on terrorism. Cyber attacks could occur from any number of sources and motivations – even from error – not just from foreign or domestic terrorists.

So our goal this morning is to help develop a cybersecurity agenda for the federal government, especially for the new Assistant Secretary. I never want to have to sit on a special committee set up to investigate why we were unprepared for a cyber attack. We know we are vulnerable, it's time to act.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' guidance on how to do just that.